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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

2 June 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Short-Term Prospects in the Dominican Republic

1. Thus far the elimination of General Trujillo, for over 30 years the dominant figure in the Dominican Republic, appears to have had a limited impact on the political situation within the country. The Balaguer government installed by Trujillo last summer apparently remains in control, and the late dictator's son Ramfis has returned to take command of the military, thus symbolizing the continuity of the regime. With Trujillo's crack military and security forces roving the streets, ex-General Diaz's assassination group and other dissident elements are in hiding.

2. We do not exclude the possibility that opposition elements may make an early bid for control. However, the assassination was apparently carried out before plans and preparations for a takeover had been completed and probably even before any effective cooperation among opposition groups had been established, and in view of the prompt reaction of the regime and its security forces,

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the opposition appears to have lost the psychological initiative. Despite the long-sustained efforts of President Betancourt of Venezuela and other democratic Latin American leaders to develop an effective opposition, those opposition elements now in exile in Venezuela and elsewhere are almost certainly not prepared to take action at this time against a regime which appears to be in full military control of the country.

3. Nevertheless, the situation will remain basically unstable, and a major upheaval is sooner or later likely to occur. Particularly in the last year or two, the barbaric practices and venality of the Trujillo regime have sharpened the hostility between Trujillo and the Church and have caused increasing alarm within the professional classes and the military. The growing hostility of the Latin American community toward the Trujillo regime, symbolized by the OAS resolution of 1960 calling for rupture of diplomatic relations with the Dominican Republic, has further underlined the desirability of a change. Although the opposition appears disorganized and may suffer serious immediate setbacks in the present police crackdown, opposition will almost certainly continue to grow. The present regime cannot hope to command the same degree of fear and authority as

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did the late dictator. Ramfis, his would-be heir, is both disliked and disrespected. He is almost certainly to behave even more ruthlessly and recklessly than his father, thus intensifying opposition to the regime. Moreover, the removal of the Generalissimo will almost certainly give free play to rivalries within the ruling group.

4. It is possible that recognition of the breadth of dissatisfaction within the country, in combination with pressure for change from the US and other Latin American countries, may lead the Balaguer government to disassociate itself from the dictatorial excesses of the old regime and make itself more acceptable. Balaguer himself is a fairly widely respected figure who had recently been the object of intrigues by the Trujillo clan and probably has some sympathy with moderate dissident elements. His quick apology to Bishop Reilly for harsh treatment of the clergy by the military in the morning of 31 May was obviously designed to avert a clash with the Church. The government's 1 June declaration of its intention to carry out its international obligations represented another bid for acceptance.

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5. Until and unless key elements in the military come to the conclusion that a major change from the past is necessary, however, the odds appear to favor an attempt to carry on the old dictatorship with only minor concessions to Dominican and hemisphere sensibilities. Ramfis, now making his bid to carry on in his father's tradition, almost certainly recognizes that he can maintain himself only by force, and the leaders of the security police, which has been the mainstay of the Trujillo regime, also realize that they have no future in a more moderate and democratic regime. Ramfis' ingrained hostility toward the US and his resentment of the attacks of other Latin American governments on his father almost certainly make him skeptical about the possibility of any real accommodation between the Dominican government and its neighbors except on the basis of their acceptance of it as an established fact.

6. Thus the outlook is for a disorderly struggle for power between the heirs of Trujillo and its domestic and exiled opponents and their supporters, with likely divisions within the ruling group adding to the confusion. The struggle may be prolonged, or may suddenly come to a head. It will almost certainly be marked by violence, at least on the part of the security forces. Ultimately, we believe the regime will fall. However, the prospects for a genuinely democratic regime coming to power under these circumstances are dim.

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7. Castro will almost certainly make a determined effort to exploit the Dominican situation. Thus far, however, his assets appear to be relatively few -- some extreme leftist groupings among Dominican exiles in Caracas, Havana, and other Caribbean cities, and a minority of university students and some supporters among the poor urban lower classes in Ciudad Trujillo. There are almost certainly a number of Communists within the Dominican Republic, although we know of no Communist apparatus there. In the propaganda field, Castro can play on the passing of Trujillo without a change in the old order (he might hold off on this if Ramfis shows himself to be pliable), the need for agrarian reform in the country, and, if the US, Betancourt and other liberal Latin American democrats treat with the Balaguer government, the folly of democracy.

8. Castro almost certainly will not go into the Dominican Republic with his military or send out invasion forces to intervene. He probably believes that these actions would bring him new trouble from the Latin American community at a time when his attempting to recoup his stature with area governments; they might serve as a pretext for US or community military action against the Cuban regime. It is more likely that Castro will

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be content to wait for an opportunity to work through Dominicans inside the country. The main danger from Communism and Castro will probably arise, not in the immediate future, but after the Trujillo apparatus has crumbled.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

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SHERMAN KENT
Chairman

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